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AUTHOR McLean, Marlene Christmas
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ABSTRACT

Second-grade students at a public school in an upper middle class neighborhood had received minimal guidance in the writing process and in self-evaluation of writing progress. In addition, the students did not have the opportunity for meaningful writing daily. A practicum was designed which addressed these problems through the use of portfolios. A teacher-made survey elicited the information that 75 of the 125 students did not like to write; teachers were also surveyed. Workshops explaining the importance of the writing process and how to teach it were presented to the second graders. The workshops provided information about the writing process, peer conferencing, writing centers, modeling the writing process, and writing workshops. The practicum developer served as a resource person for the other second grade teachers and assisted them with setting up writing centers in their classrooms and with the development of student portfolios. Results of the practicum were positive. Analysis of the data revealed that the teachers understood and taught the writing process and that the students showed increased growth in using the writing process and in self-evaluation of their writing growth. (Contains 30 references, the teacher survey, the student survey, and teacher interview questions.) (Author/NKA)

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Increasing the Writing Process Skills of Second Graders Through the Implementation of Portfolios

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Cluster 60

A Practicum I Report presented to the
Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

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PRACTICUM APPROVAL SHEET

This practicum took place as described.

Verifier: Menia G. Stone

Menia G. Stone, Ed.D.

Principal
Title

Miami, Florida
Address

August 15, 1994
Date

This practicum report was submitted by Marlene Christmas McLean under the direction of the adviser listed below. It was submitted to the Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Nova Southeastern University.

Approved:

August 27, 1994
Date of Final Approval of Report

Ann E. Fordham
Ann E. Fordham, Ed.D., Adviser

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ABSTRACT

Increasing the Writing Process Skills of Second Graders Through the Implementation of Portfolios. McLean, Marlene Christmas, 1994: Practicum Report, Nova Southeastern University, Ed.D Program in Child and Youth Studies. Second Grade/Writing Process/ Portfolios/ Assessment/Self-Evaluation/Writing Instruction

This practicum addressed the problem that the second grade students at the writer's school had received minimal guidance in the writing process and in self-evaluation of their writing progress. In addition, the students did not have the opportunity for meaningful writing daily.

The writer concentrated on increasing the writing process skills of the second grade students through the implementation of portfolios. Workshops explaining the importance of and how to teach the writing process were presented to the second grade teachers. The workshops provided information about the writing process, peer conferencing, writing centers, modeling the writing process, and writing workshops. The writer served as a resource person to the other second grade teachers and assisted them with setting up writing centers in their classrooms and with the development of student portfolios.

The results of the practicum were positive. Analysis of the data revealed that the second grade teachers understood and taught the writing process and the students showed increased growth in using the writing process and in self-evaluation of their writing growth.

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August 15, 1994 Marlene C. McLean

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Description of Work Setting and Community

This practicum was implemented in an elementary school in a major public school system. The school is a 22 year old, well maintained open-space building designed with large teaching areas called learning centers.

The students are assigned to instructional groups according to their achievement level within the basic skills areas of language arts and mathematics. The students do not remain in one group or with one teacher all day long but routinely may experience more than one classroom teacher during the course of a school day. In addition, the students have the benefit of full time art, music, and physical education teachers as well as the services of a full time elementary guidance counselor.

The regular program is supplemented by instruction for speakers of Spanish as well as classes for learning Spanish as a second language for students in grades 2-5. There is also a small enrollment of students in ESOL classes.

An itinerant Speech and Language Pathologist assists students in the area of speech and language problems and the school is serviced by an area School Psychologist and a Placement Specialist as are all other elementary schools in the county. The administrative staff consists of one principal and one assistant principal.

The school houses an Extension Center for surrounding elementary schools which consists of instruction for gifted education two days a week. A large number of this school's population attends the program and there is great emphasis by the parents for their child to qualify for this program.

The regular class enrollment is from kindergarten through fifth grade with the school's sixth grade population attending a sixth grade center as part of the county's integration plan. Within the past few years one pre-school class of students has been added to the school program. The school's membership consists of approximately 72% white non-hispanic, 15% black non-hispanic, 12% hispanic, and 1% Asian.

The school is in an upper-middle class neighborhood. A very high number of parents are professionals. The 740 pre-kindergarten through fifth grade students have a very high daily attendance rate, at times surpassing schools in the

entire county.

The caliber of student behavior is very high with considerable participation in school activities. Students, for the most part, are from homes placing great emphasis on academic achievement. The students are involved in many school and community projects. The PTA provides a large amount of monetary support as well as special cultural arts programs, Drug Fairs, Ecology Fairs, and much valuable classroom assistance. In addition, the PTA generously supplies money for classroom aides at each grade level from individual family donations. Parents and teachers actively support the total program of the school.

The staff is made up of a majority of highly qualified teachers, many of whom have taught at this school for a long period of time. There is very little turnover among the staff and the entire school has an excellent reputation throughout the county.

Writer's Work Setting and Role

Five classes of second grade students and teachers were the subjects for the practicum. The students and teachers were grouped into a team of two teachers and 50 students which was housed in a learning center downstairs and a team

of three teachers and 75 students which was located upstairs. There were a total of 125 second grade students in all.

The writer is a native of her locale and a product of the school system in which she is currently employed. She has a bachelor's and a master's degree in elementary education. In addition, she is certified in early childhood education. The writer has accumulated the majority of her teaching experience in the county where she currently teaches and has been a teacher at her present location for 18 years. The majority of her experience has been that of a first grade teacher although her assignment for the current school year is that of second grade teacher.

She has shown leadership in her school by serving as Future Educators of America Sponsor, Elementary Activities Sponsor, Primary Department Chairman, First Grade Chairman, and has served many years on the Faculty Council. She has led her school in a state and nationally acclaimed Pineland Restoration Project and has initiated and implemented an annual Reading Sleep-Over event for the past five years.

Additionally, the writer has received an Impact II Developer Grant for two innovative teaching/resource curriculum ideas. She was selected as her school's Teacher of the Year for 1991 and was a Region Finalist for Teacher of the

Year. She was also her school's nominee for Reading Teacher of the Year and the 1993 nominee for Elementary Math Teacher of the Year. She has helped secure major technology grants for the school and currently is the second grade representative on the school writing committee.

CHAPTER II

STUDY OF THE PROBLEM

Problem Description

The problem experienced at this writer's school was a growing concern in the district as well as throughout the nation. Until recently schools have placed little emphasis on teaching students to write and even less emphasis on the role of revision in the writing process. The second grade students had received minimal guidance in the writing process and were not able to self-evaluate their writing. In addition, the students showed writing apprehension in the form of general avoidance of writing or any situation that was perceived by the students to potentially require some amount of writing.

It was the writer's observation that the second grade students and teachers generally thought of writing in terms of a final product--a story describing a summer vacation, a book report due Friday and the task seemed overwhelming. Writing and learning to write in school was a serious source of difficulty for students and their rich collections of ideas and stories often did not end up effectively communicated in

writing.

Current research showed that writing is a process and that the purposes of writing are best achieved when instruction allows for each of the appropriate phases of the writing process. But, traditionally, the teachers assigned topics and students wrote. Instruction took place in the form of a grade, corrections, and comments on students' papers. Students were learning to write as a result of the mistakes they made in their writing. For many this model was somewhat adequate. For many, however, this method was intimidating and non-productive.

Learning to write is an essential part of a student's education. Writing effectively is a cumulative skill and is best attained from a comprehensive writing program. However, at the writer's school the focus for evaluation of writing, like the focus for teaching it, did not extend beyond isolated features. Because the second grade teachers tended to focus on issues such as spelling, handwriting, or grammar and ignored the more important issues such as organization, many students could not produce writing that said something logically, cohesively, persuasively.

In order to change student perceptions about writing, the teachers needed to emphasize through evaluation procedures

and through the teaching of the writing process, the importance of organization and thinking. The teachers could then expand the writing that students are capable of producing and address the various problems in writing as students go through the writing process.

The ideal situation would have been for the second grade students to have teachers with a clear understanding of the writing process and the critical role it plays in their literacy development. But the teachers reported that they had no training and did not feel secure enough to impart this information to their students.

The second grade students needed the opportunity to reflect on and evaluate their own writing. Often the students needed time to review their work alone or with peers. They needed to learn to analyze their work in order to see how they created text. Writing growth needed to occur with teachers as facilitators and guides, conferencing with students as necessary. It was the writer's observation that the second grade students did not participate in the assessment process nor did they recognize their own strengths and needs.

In his book, Writing: Teachers and Children at Work, Donald Graves (1983) suggested that children come to school ready to write. The teacher's job is to nurture that positive

attitude, to encourage risk-taking, and to demonstrate the strategies that good writers employ as they compose. The second grade teachers needed to not only encourage and foster positive feelings toward writing, but to find effective ways of evaluating the final product as well. The students did not have time for meaningful daily writing experiences nor did they choose their own topics.

Briefly stated, the second grade students had received minimal guidance in the writing process. They were not able to self-evaluate their writing.

Problem Documentation

Evidence of the problem was supported by teacher observation, teacher interviews, a teacher survey, and a student survey.

According to a teacher-made teacher survey, when asked if they felt knowledgeable about the writing process and able to impart that knowledge to their students, four out of five second grade teachers replied "no". All of the teachers indicated that they had no previous training in teaching the writing process and all wanted more information on conferencing with students and ways to help students self-evaluate their writing.

Teacher interviews revealed that the second grade teachers did not provide meaningful opportunities for the students to write daily. Four of the five teachers reported that their students wrote only one or two times a week and that the writing period was approximately 20 minutes long. Additionally, four of the five second grade teachers reported minimal opportunities for students to choose their own topics for writing.

A teacher-made student survey asking if students liked to write showed that 75 of the 125 second grade students did not enjoy writing. They exhibited a preference for math with 60 of the 125 students indicating that writing was their hardest subject. The students indicated that they had little chance to edit their own writing.

Observation of the second grade teachers' plan books showed no evidence of teaching the writing process. All of the teachers taught writing in the traditional way of assigning topics, children writing, teachers correcting, students copying over.

Causative Analysis

The causes of the problem were from a combination of factors, procedures, people, and attitudes. There was an

environment that placed a great deal of emphasis on high test scores and high academic achievement. Many parents in this school were very successful and they expected their children to be successful also. They placed much importance upon obtaining a good education and fostered competitiveness in their children. Parents also used high test scores to judge the teacher's and the school's program.

The teachers would have liked to spend more time teaching writing and giving their students meaningful writing opportunities to write but because of this academic climate a large amount of classroom time was spent on evaluation that paralleled achievement tests; i.e. multiple-choice, true-false, fill-in-the-blank, and short answer items. The students were accustomed to feeding back bits of information and doing low-level repetitive assignments. A preponderance of workbook and ditto activities where students need only to circle or underline the best answer from the ones listed was apparent.

Most importantly, there was lack of teacher knowledge and training in using the writing process. All of the second grade teachers were experienced teachers who entered the teaching profession long before the emphasis and training on whole language and literacy development. Likewise, emphasis in this school and county had just begun this year and writing

had only recently been made part of the school's improvement plan. The school system was just beginning to implement competency based curriculum but four of the five teachers had not yet received their training.

Relationship of the Problem to the Literature

A review of the literature suggested that the methods currently in use in writing classrooms are ineffective and do not contribute to the growth of writing. Two such factors are the emphasis that teachers and parents place on grades in the classroom, and the lack of quality writing opportunities for the students. An even larger factor is the controversy over the effectiveness of standardized tests.

Tests reflect an outdated view of classrooms and restrict goals for learning. Cronbach (1971) argued that tests developed in one decade are not apt to be appropriate in another. According to Fong Yun Lee (1992), standardized testing has a negative impact on students. One major complaint is that the tests do not measure higher-order thinking skills. Students are simply encouraged to give back information obtained through rote memorization. Farr (1990) pointed out that students never develop responses on standardized tests but merely select one answer choice from

those already constructed. The student is not required to go through the thinking process to add their own ideas to the answer.

Another complaint was that the test items are not associated with real life experiences. Many students might not have the necessary schema to correctly answer the questions on standardized tests. Part of the reason may be that standardized tests are often racially, culturally, and socially biased according to Farr.

Standardized tests have also contributed to the negative categorizing and labeling of students. If students score poorly on a test simply because of illness or outside circumstances, a stigma is created that might follow them through their school career. All of these factors lead to a learned test anxiety which causes students to not try to do well on tests in order to protect their self-esteem (Lee,1992). If students fear that they may score poorly on a test, they may not try to do well at all so that they will not be embarrassed or disappointed. This allows students to feel that they are still in control of the testing situation.

Brian Cutting (1991) felt that a balanced approach to evaluation is needed. Emphasis should be on observation and, more importantly, with students' own evaluation of their

learning. Tests just don't give the feedback needed for self-evaluation of learning. This often leaves students and teachers feeling as if they have failed, when in reality, partial success was present. The only way for students to visualize this partial success and profit from it is to involve them in a personal, on-going self-evaluative system.

To Bunce-Crim (1992) traditional grading methods don't seem to reflect the kinds of learning taking place in the classroom. Both instruction and assessment of writing have focused on mechanics: spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and neatness (Peltz & Finn, 1981).

Many researchers pointed to the discrepancy over definitions of writing which has caused problems with assessment (Searle & Dellon, 1980). Many more felt that accountability pressures encourage teachers and administrators to focus planning and instructional efforts on test content and devote more and more time to preparing students to do well on the tests (Dorr-Bremme & Herman, 1993; Herman & Golan, 1991; Kelleghan & Madaus, 1991; Shepard, 1991). Time focused on test content has narrowed curriculum by overemphasizing basic skills subjects and neglecting higher-order thinking skills (Herman & Golan, 1991).

Perhaps the largest weakness of all was that teachers do not have a balanced approach to evaluation with emphasis on observation. Abruscato (1993) agreed that a personal, on-going self-evaluation system is the only way for students to visualize success. Basically, personal self-evaluation is the foundation of successful writing growth. Teachers can recognize when students are doing their best and can use that information to create learning experiences to help students.

CHAPTER III

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS

Goals and Expectations

The following goals and outcomes were projected for this practicum. The second grade students will receive increased guidance and support in the writing process and in self-evaluation of their own writing progress. Additionally, the teachers will show growth in their knowledge of the writing process and their ability to impart that knowledge to their students.

If the classroom is going to become a place for writers, students must be given time to write; they must be given good reasons to write; and they must be readers of their writing. If they are going to learn to value writing the classroom needs to become a place where it is as natural and right to read a student's story as it is to read a basal reader or a library book. It needs to become the place where students pay attention to their own writing and the writing of other students.

The writer wanted to see the assessment of writing progress through student's real writing become an acceptable

option as compared to standardized testing and felt that inservice training opportunities were needed for the second grade teachers. The direction of writing instruction needed to have emphasis properly placed upon the writing process.

Expected Outcomes

1. Four out of five second grade teachers will show growth in their knowledge and use of the writing process. This will be evident by their responses on a post-implementation of the teacher survey (Appendix A). It is expected that the teachers will respond favorably to questions numbered 1,2,7,8, and 9.

2. Five out of five second grade teachers will provide opportunities for the students to write daily. This will be evident by the teachers' self-reports during post-implementation interviews (Appendix C).

3. Seventy-five out of 150 second grade students will enjoy writing. This will be evident by their favorable responses on the post-implementation student survey (Appendix B).

4. Five out of five second grade teachers will teach the writing process. This will be evident by a post-implementation review of the teachers' plan books.

Measurement of Outcomes

A teacher-made teacher survey was designed to assess whether teachers were knowledgable about the writing process; whether they could impart this knowledge to their students; and whether the teachers were interested in learning more about helping their students enjoy writing and become better writiers.

A teacher-made student survey was designed to measure how the students felt about the way they write. This measure was chosen because it allowed the students to evaluate their feelings about writing.

Teacher interviews were conducted to ascertain whether teachers were providing daily writing opportunities for their students.

A review of the teachers' plan books was used to determine if the teachers were teaching the writing process. It was evident by reviewing the plan books how many times and which activities the teachers included for writing.

Analysis of the data included a comparison of pre and post implementation scores of the teacher and student surveys, teacher interviews, and review of the teachers' plan books.

CHAPTER IV

SOLUTION STRATEGY

Discussion and Evaluation of Solutions

Teaching the writing process and developing means for students to self-evaluate their own writing progress was a growing concern at the writer's school, the district, as well as an issue throughout the nation.

Literature suggested many solutions to the problem. Research had found that an understanding of how children learn is now leading to changes in classroom assessment. Graves (1983), Calkins (1986), and Routman (1988) provided information about writing development while Glazer & Searfoss (1988) defined a series of principles that illustrate differences in children's writing.

The research also suggested that assessment should lead to an understanding of how students solve problems, what they understand, and what they can do. According to cognitive researchers, meaningful learning is reflective, constructive, and self-regulated (Bransford & Vye, 1989; Davis & Maher, 1990; Marzano, 1988; Wittrock, 1991). Recent studies of the

integration of learning and motivation also highlighted the importance of affective and metacognitive skills (McComb, 1991; Weinstein & Meyer, 1991).

The literature revealed that many schools were requesting alternative assessments that are structured to assess students' strengths and accomplishments, as well as their weaknesses or failures. This new means of assessment enabled teachers to make informed decisions regarding instruction, to provide direction, and to help bring students' performance in line with their potential. Beyond the impact on instruction, studies of some states found improved student performance over time associated with new assessment programs (Chapman, 1991; Quellmalz & Burry, 1983).

One popular solution, as related by Hansen (1987), was the establishment of a community within a classroom to provide support and encouragement for individuals as they learn to work together. As students write collaboratively they learn to value each other's contributions and enjoy each other's accomplishments. Publishing books together as a class can help the collaborative process evolve.

Another simple strategy that makes a big difference in writing skills was reading and writing for real reasons. Easy activities such as morning sign-in, pen pals, notetaking

notebook's, posters, and writing for information help students write enthusiastically as they see immediate rewards for their efforts. Hansen also found that the first step in preparing students to become writers is to encourage them to talk about themselves, their personal lives at home, their likes, dislikes, memories, etc. These shared experiences provide a context for the student's writing.

In a whole language classroom students are encouraged to use writing folders or booklets so that their writing progress can be observed over a period of time. Students are encouraged to go through stages of the writing process as they develop their writing skills.

These stages were best described by Schwartz & Pollischuke (1991) in Creating the Child Centered Classroom. The stages consist of:

Prewriting	brainstorming, reading, listening to stories, drawing or reflecting on experiences
Writing	writing thoughts while fresh in mind-- tend to details later
Revising	additions or alterations are made to content to improve the first draft
Editing	done with peers or teacher; attention now paid to mechanics of the written work before publishing it
Publishing	decisions are made as to how the

piece will be published and shared

In a whole language classroom, students are treated as authors and provided with a variety of writing materials and resources so that their stories can be illustrated and turned into books. An important aspect of this teaching method is the conference or one-to-one talk between teacher and child. The teacher confers with the child, discusses the topic, listens to the child comment on or read what he or she has written, questions the child to help him or her extend or clarify the content, gives help with the conventions of writing as it is needed, writes out incorrectly spelled words or re-writes the whole of the work, and helps the child get it ready for publication. An increasing number of teachers in Australia and New Zealand are using this method of teaching writing as introduced by Professor Donald Graves of the University of New Hampshire (1983).

Most teachers find that they can only confer with each child once or twice a week and usually do this by working with a different group each day. Those children who are not in conference with the teacher discuss and read their work with other children, giving one another help and advice.

An effective writing strategy should foster good thinking habits. Graves reminded us that the writing process involves regular shifts between searching the mind, writing, and

testing the written statement. The process reflects solid teaching and learning. In thoughtful learning, we ask ourselves what we know and where we want to go. We then proceed to gain the knowledge that we think is appropriate. Finally, we review or sum up what we have learned to see whether we are now better off than when we started. The writing process leads through the same kind of reflective learning that we would use in any other effective learning experience.

A final solution to enhance writing was a national movement encouraging the development of student writing portfolios. The literature suggested this to be an exciting and challenging way for students to write more frequently and for teachers to assess only the best pieces of student writing from among a variety of writings. Portfolios allow students to participate in the evaluation and assessment of their own writing as well as provide an opportunity for teachers to assess a larger body of student work.

Portfolios are not writing enhancement folders, nor are they traditional "work folders" which include quizzes, tests, worksheets, etc. Portfolios are defined in a variety of ways, depending on the people who use them. According to Paulson, Paulson, & Meyer (1991) a portfolio is:

> a purposeful collection of students' work that exhibits the students' efforts, progress, and achievements in

> one or more areas. The collection must include student participation in selecting contents, the criteria for selection, the criteria for judging merit, and evidence of student self-evaluation (p.60).

Although the teacher gives the student general guidelines for what to include, it is the students who must critique their own work to decide what gets selected to go into the portfolio.

Giving the students power to choose what gets evaluated is an important key concept of portfolio assessment. Linda Reif (1990) looks at it as a way of giving students responsibility for learning. Teachers work together with the students to help them learn how to evaluate and judge the merit of their own writings. Students are actively engaged in the learning process because they are selecting the pieces to be included. According to Spann (1991) when students have this responsibility they are gaining elements of respect, trust, and choice.

In order for students to be able to choose which pieces should go into the portfolio, self-evaluation must occur. Through portfolio assessment students look at and evaluate their writing in a whole new light. Self-evaluation helps the students to stop and think about the way that they write, what they need to revise and rework, and how they feel about writing. According to Marna Bunce-Crim (1992) allowing students to evaluate themselves allows them to discover their

own strengths and weaknesses. In this way they can control certain aspects of their own learning which leads to more enthusiastic writing.

Description of Selected Solution

The writer found that portfolio assessment is so successful in the classroom because it is an organized, fair, and non-threatening way to assess students' writing progress. It is beneficial to the students because they are directly invested in the process. The students learn valuable self-evaluation and reflection techniques that they can not get from anywhere else but from examining their own writing. They are given the power of choice and selection of what they want to be evaluated on. Students grow from being able to see their own progress and growth as a writer. Most importantly, though, is that through portfolio assessment, students can see and understand that writing is a continual process. A process through which all students learn to celebrate their own writing skills and abilities.

There are many benefits to implementing portfolio assessment in writing classrooms. Portfolios communicate important information to the teacher not only on how the students are progressing in their writing, but on how effective

the teacher's lessons are as well. Portfolios are an important tool for teachers because they can be used as a clear indicator of the effectiveness of their own teaching. Through concrete writing samples teachers can see the actual skills being applied in context. The teachers can also see the students' weaknesses and what lessons need to be planned to make learning more meaningful. Portfolios can be used not only to benefit the students' learning, but the teacher's learning as well.

The writer learned that the teachers needed a new way to assess writing that would increase the engagement of students in thoughtful writing activities and would provide more detailed records of their growth in the writing process over time. The writer selected the following solutions to the problem:

1. Keeping a portfolio gives students a chance to reflect on their progress as writers. And by its nature, according to Bunce-Crim (1992), portfolio assessment fosters positive writing behaviors. Evaluation of students' writing progress was based on student developed portfolios. The students were given opportunities to reflect upon their own writing and to select the pieces for their portfolios.

2. According to Farr (1990), students are not asked to go

through the thinking process and add their own ideas to the answer when too much emphasis is placed on multiple-choice type standardized tests. Students' time spent on worksheets was replaced with meaningful writing opportunities daily. The teachers established writing centers in their classrooms to facilitate daily writing by the students. The students were taught to use the writing process in their daily writing.

3. Donald Graves (1983) explains that students learn to write by writing. When students write, edit, and correct their own work it is a positive approach that respects the students' judgment. The second grade teachers received guidance and assistance in teaching the writing process. The writer served as a resource person to the other second grade teachers and assisted them with the writing process and with the development of student portfolios.

Report of Action Taken

The writer applied the recommendations of writing authorities who promote using the writing process to effectively teach writing. Teacher training had not included sufficient information on ways for teachers to break away from a traditional method of emphasis on grammar and punctuation. The writer held mini-workshops on teaching the

writing process. These inservice activities provided help with integrating writing with other curricula. The workshops provided the second grade teachers with information about the writing process, peer conferencing, writing centers, modeling the writing process, and writing workshops. Once several sessions were conducted, the remaining help was usually on an individual basis.

In order to change the character of second grade writing instruction to include emphasis on the writing process, the writer assisted the second grade teachers in setting up a writing center in their classrooms. One of the characteristics of a successful writing program is that it includes emphasis on the value of writing. A writing center served both the teacher and student as they came to accept and understand the contribution invented spelling played in writing. These writing centers gave the second grade students the opportunity to write daily.

As the students used the writing center and it became a valuable part of the classroom they were encouraged to take risks in writing and to use their imaginations. The writing centers were stocked with lined and unlined writing paper, pencils, crayons, markers, a word bank of cards, dictionaries, and any accessories that could be used for writing. There was

room for several students to work in "authors chairs" and space nearby to get together and talk about their work.

Evaluation of writing must have as its goal the improvement of the writing product through the growing insight of the writer. The writer has to be an active paticipant in the evaluation process and must be able to observe his/her growth and development. The writer offered her services as a resource person and provided numerous suggestions, activities and materials to assist the second grade teachers in developing writing portfolios with the students. This provided the teachers with a constant source of support and encouragement. Working together with the teachers served as a model for cooperative behavior.

First, the second grade students and teachers needed to develop the concept of portfolios. Visits by a prominent local newspaper columnist and an artist were scheduled. The columnist gave a detailed description of how she writes her columns from start to finsh. She shared how she gets ideas for columns and each step of her process. She also showed the students her portfolio of writings and how she selected each piece to include in her portfolio. Months later the students were still clipping her columns out of the newspaper and proudly bringing them to school for the bulletin board.

Due to the size of some of her artwork, the artist brought in a very large portfolio to share with the students. She carefully explained why she selected each piece to include. Both presentations were very instrumental in setting the stage for introducing portfolios to the students and teachers.

As a culminating activity an evening "Portfolio Party" was held to celebrate the students' growth in writing. Families spread out around the room and read through their child's portfolio. The parents enthusiastically completed an evaluation sheet for their child's work.

In summary, the writer concentrated on increasing the second grade students writing process skills by: assisting the teachers to understand and teach the writing process; helping the teachers establish writing centers in their classrooms; arranging workshop and peer-teacher activities; and assisting the teachers and sudents in developing writing portfolios.

CHAPTER V

RESULTS, DISCUSSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Results

The problem experienced in this writer's school was that the second grade students had received minimal guidance in the writing process and in self-evaluation of their writing progress. There were few meaningful opportunities for the students to write daily.

The solution strategy was made up of several components. First, following guidelines for teaching the writing process by Pollischuke (1991), mini-workshops were held for the second grade teachers to know, understand, and learn to teach the writing process. Second, the writer met with the teachers and provided materials and assistance in developing writing portfolios with the students. The portfolios, as described by Paulson, Paulson, & Meyer (1991), were "a purposeful collection of the student's work that exhibited the student's efforts, progress, and achievements" (p.60). Third, in order for the students to write meaningfully and collaboratively as suggested by Hansen (1987), the writer

assisted the second grade teachers in setting up writing centers in their classrooms.

The first outcome was that four out of five second grade teachers would show growth in their knowledge and use of the writing process. The outcome was met. All five of the teachers responded on the post-implementation teacher survey that they no longer needed help or information on teaching the writing process. All of the second grade teachers felt knowledgable and used the writing process.

The second outcome was that five out of five second grade teachers would provide opportunities for the students to write daily. The outcome was met. All five teachers reported in teacher interviews that students wrote daily writing in classroom writing centers.

The third outcome was that 75 of the 150 second grade students would enjoy writing. This outcome was surpassed. Post-implementation responses on the student survey indicated that 105 students liked to write and chose writing as their favorite activity.

The fourth outcome was that five out of five second grade teachers would teach the writing process. This outcome was met. A post-implementation review of the teachers' plan books indicated that the number of writing activities that the

teachers planned had increased. The quality of the writing activities increased as well. The teachers taught, modeled, and guided the second grade students in the writing process.

Discussion

The first outcome of teacher growth in knowledge of the writing process was evaluated by a post-implementation administration of the teacher-made teacher survey. The projected outcome was that five of the five second grade teachers would understand and teach the writing process. A review of the teacher surveys revealed that this outcome was met and there was an increased awareness of the value of teaching the writing process. The writer feels that the training the teachers received in workshops and individually was instrumental in creating the maximum learning environment for writing development. Writing instruction should give students many oportunities to communicate their own ideas. Writing should be taught as a student-centered, skill-based, active process. Students need the mechanics of writing such as grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, spelling, but using the writing process switched a mechanical

activity to a problem-solving activity. This confirmed the findings of Glazer & Searfoss (1988).

The second anticipated outcome was that five of the five teachers would provide opportunities for the students to write daily. The results were that in direct teacher interviews all of the second grade teachers reported they had established writing centers in their classrooms. The successful use of these writing centers supported the contentions of Graves (1983), Calkins (1986), and Routman (1988). As proposed by Hansen (1987) these centers provided the students with opportunities to choose their own topics, receive and share ideas for writing with their peers, and accumulate writing pieces from which they would later make selections for their portfolios.

Writers need an audience. Peer editors provided a built-in audience for the second grade writers. It became obvious to the teachers that writing in school works better as a cooperative pursuit than a solitary one. Every week the students shared their portfolios with their peers. They were given 10-15 minutes to look at one other person's portfolio, then wrote a positive comment to their classmate. Over time, the students had the opportunity to see all of the other student's portfolios and came to know and help each other with

their writing. Some examples of supportive comments the students made to each other were:

> Wow, you really like to write poetry! I liked your limerick about St. Patrick's Day the best.

> You are a great writer! I was really scared when I read your dragon story. You made it seem so real!

> Your writing ends up really good. Is that because you write so many drafts? I really like your portfolio. It is also really colorful.

The development of portfolios helped the students at the metacognitive level, also, as they were encouraged to think about what is important about the pieces they selected. By reviewing their portfolios often, the students reflected on their work and self-evaluation became a part of instruction. The students were very capable of addressing questions such as "Why did you select this piece?" or "What does it show me about you as a writer and learner?" According to Bunce-Crim (1992), this led the students to discover their own strengths and weaknesses which fostered enthusiastic writing. Some excerpts from different student's self-reflections that accompanied pieces in their portfolios were:

> I selected this writing sample for my portfolio because it was a long story and I had to use my good brain and work for a long, long time on it.

> I learned that you can change a story so it can be by you. I also learned to write a rough draft and a final draft.
>
> This was the first story I ever wrote on a computer. Writing a story on a computer is a great way to think of ideas.
>
> I learned that Hiaku's are fun! First, you have to know your subject. Next you have to write a five syllable sentence, then a seven sylllable one, and then another five syllable one. I love writing hiakus. I hope you do, too!

The third outcome was the most rewarding one for the writer. The desired behavior was that 75 of the 150 second grade students would enjoy writing. This was measured by a post-implementation administration of the student survey. This outcome was surpassed when 105 students responded that they liked to write and chose writing as their favorite activity. The students were so fascinated with using **DRAFT COPY** and **FINAL COPY** stamps the teachers had purchased that they stopped complaining about having to write their papers over.

The writer feels that the added emphasis on teaching the writing process, the greater recognition of the students for their writing efforts, and the added confidence of the teachers and the students caused the students to be more enthusiastic and proud of their writing. This was consistent with the

writings of Donald Graves (1983), one of many authors who pointed out that children learn to write by writing.

The majority of the students in the five second grade classes wrote that they liked writing and felt positive about it. A few still had ambivalent feelings. Those few students indicated that it made their hand hurt. Students in all of the classes thought that they wrote a lot and expressed a high level of confidence and self-esteem about themselves as writers. This verified and supported the writings of Spann (1991) that when students have this responsibility they are gaining elements of respect, trust, and choice.

The fouth outcome was that the second grade teachers would teach the writing process. The acceptable outcome was that five of the five teachers would show evidence of this teaching by a review of their plan books. This review showed that all five of the teachers were more able to define their writing objectives. The second grade teachers successfully changed their traditional methods of writing instruction which had placed emphasis on mechanics rather than on significant growth in literacy development to that of developing and planning writing activities that placed importance on the process rather than the product.

Using the writing process allowed the students to

generate ideas (prewrite), make drafts (write), elicit response (share), revise, edit and make a final clean copy (publish). This form of teaching writing provided the students not only with the oppportunity to read and study published writers, but also with the chance to view themselves as authors. The students became aware of what constitutes good writing and developed criteria for evaluating writing. Writing became for the students a means for self-discovery and self-expression, as well as a method for problem solving.

Further, as proposed by Reif (1990), instruction in the writing process fostered skills that extended to all content areas since it engaged students in learning/thinking operations, allowed the students to interact with one another, reinforced concepts learned, and required the students to become more actively involved in their own learning. Graves (1985) also reminded us that the writing process reflects solid teaching and learning.

A major benefit of this practicum was the nurturing of independent writers. This was fostered by the development of portfolios. There were many other benefits to implementing portfolios as well. Through concrete writing samples, the teachers could see the actual skills being applied in context. The teachers could also see the students' weaknesses and what

lessons needed to be planned to make learning more meaningful. It was obvious to this writer that portfolios were used not only to benefit the students' learning, but the teachers' learning as well as confirmed by the findings of Abruscato (1993).

Since the students kept a great deal of their "in-process" writing in their folder at school to review and revise, some of the teachers worried about not sending writing home. These fears were removed upon the huge success of the Portfolio Party. Comments to students from parents after reviewing their child's writing were:

> We so enjoyed reading all your portfolio entries. I think the one on being happy with who you are made us very happy. We're so proud of you and your love of writing.
>
> I am very proud of the stories and illustrations you have put together in your portfolio. It was a lot of fun to sit in your special seat and to see the things you have enjoyed writing about. Keep up the good work!
>
> I enjoyed everything in your portfolio. I especially loved reading why you selected the samples which you included. The story of "Spooky" was my favorite. I think you are a great writer and I am very proud of you!

The activities implemented in this practicum resulted in the same benefits and successes as those described in the

literature. The results included increased growth in the writing process and in self-evaluation by the students of their writing growth. It was learned as the teachers worked with the students that both the process and the products of writing are important for the students' development. Both guided the teachers to see strengths and needs of students as they moved through stages of writing development.

Recommendations

The writer has three specific recommendations based on the results of this practicum. First, have students make their own folders for their portfolios in art class by using oak tag and brightly painting them. Second, include other artifacts such as artwork, tapes and projects in their portfolios. Third, investigate the use of electronic portfolios. Several software programs offer the ability to input all writing into a profile program that can be utilized throughout a student's school career.

Dissemination

The results of this practicum were shared in several ways. The first was the reporting of the practicum

results to the second grade teachers involved in the practicum. Secondly, the writer presented the results to the administration and at a meeting of the school writing committee. The writer also shared the practicum with several other teachers in other school settings and within other school systems. In the future, the writer will assist the first grade teachers in setting up portfolios for their students.

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APPENDIX A

TEACHER-MADE TEACHER SURVEY

TEACHER SURVEY

Please check any statements with which you are in agreement.

1._____ The students in my classroom are provided with meaningful writing opportunities daily.

2._____ I feel that I am knowledgeable about the writing process and can impart this knowledge to my students.

3._____ I would like additional information about teaching the writing process.

4._____ I would like information about ways to conference with children about their writing.

5._____ I would like information about how students can self-evaluate their writing.

6._____ I would like help with setting up writing portfolios with my students.

7._____ The students in my classroom are using writing portfolios.

8._____ The students' stories are routinely published.

9._____ My students get ideas and help in writing from their peers.

10._____ I have had no previous training in teaching the writing process.

APPEXDIX B

TEACHER-MADE STUDENT SURVEY

Appendix B
Student Survey

This is how I feel about the way I write.

1. I like to write.	Yes	No
2. I can remember the stories I've written.	Yes	No
3. Sometimes I edit my first draft.	Yes	No
4. Writing is my favorite activity.	Yes	No
5. I like to choose my own topics when I write.	Yes	No
6. I like to illustrate my writing with my drawing.	Yes	No

7. Sometimes I like to change the end of a story. Yes No

8. Which one of these subjects is your favorite?

   A. math B. science C. reading

   D. writing E. social studies

9. Which one of these subjects is the most important to study?

   A. math B. science C. reading

   D. writing E. social studies

10. Which one of these subjects is hardest for you?

    A. math B. science C. reading

    D. writing E. social studies

APPEXDIX C

TEACHER INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Appendix C
Teacher Interview Questions

1. How many times are the students given the opportunity to write during the week?

2. How much time are they given to write?

3. How many opportunities are the students given to choose their own topics?